

EARLY BREAKFASTS AND HEAVY RAIN

On the back of Harrogate it was a quick change, iron some shirts, see the kids for Saturday and Sunday then head off to the GIS show in Orlando. I knew I had a very busy schedule of classes, seminars and meetings ahead of me. With attendance from other Associations as well it was to be a big week. There were lots of highlights throughout the week and a big British and Irish contingent over at the show this year.

Classes started on Monday/Tuesday and there were plenty to choose from technical turf issues to management courses.

WEDNESDAY

Set up the stand on the show. John, Sami and I attended the President's Reception and Main Show Reception. I met some old friends and made some new ones, from Canada and the States.

THURSDAY

I attended the Superintendents' Breakfast Seminar. I attended this session last year and again was amazed at the number of people bearing in mind that the start time was a 6am breakfast, then from 6.30am, two hours of 20 minute presentations. There were at least 300 in the audience for the opening seminar 'Five things you can do with your stimpmeter'. Some very funny slides and a good presentation from Mike Morris. More about that later. Also, Dean Pillar, an old friend, gave a presentation on managing physical properties on greens.

I then moved on to the opening session of the GIS to see Greg Norman collect his Old Tom Morris Award. Greg gave a fantastic insight into his work within the golf industry and his support of the Golf Course Superintendents and greenkeepers, where he works for the GCSAA as Chairman of the Board of the Environmental Institution.

I was coming to realise that my very early start could have been a mistake later that day as I attended more meetings, with Rainbird Syngenta and then on to a dinner, hosted by Bernhard's. I was fortunate enough to be seated next to Mike Morris who had given his presentation earlier, so a very good evening followed, covering that, and many subjects.



The BIGGA Delegation, sponsored by Bernhards, was also in attendance.

An entertaining evening following what amounted to being a very long day for me, which had me struggling by 11pm.

FRIDAY

Another early start to the Superintendents' Breakfast, very well attended again. Some more superb presentations. We were then on the move again to a meeting with the Mechanics Association to discuss how they could link in with our new category for mechanics memberships. Lots of education workshops and broadcasts through the internet with the possibility of linking through webcasts for education programmes

On the stand at the show I was amazed at how much interest there was in our Master Greenkeeper Certificate from the American Superintendents.

Also, some interest from exhibitors looking at stand space for Harrogate next year.

SATURDAY

A much quieter day at the show which finished around lunchtime. A good time to get round and pick up some literature. Sami and I spent some time talking about future ideas going forward into 2009 for Harrogate with speeches and education. A leisurely afternoon followed with colleagues from the industry.

SUNDAY

A day of rest before returning home, but not before work first thing Monday morning, turning my thoughts back to the real job.

BACK AT THE COURSE

A very wet start to the week in which I returned. It began to dry out but had already given us some problems with our construction project on our 11th hole. With only three or four days completed construction in January. We are now four weeks behind schedule. With the course starting to dry out we can progress with the project once again. I was very impressed with how quickly the course did manage to dry out, although the delay gave us time to focus on our tree planting and thinning projects.

We then had our annual Supplier's Golf Day at the Belfry. We entertained our suppliers from within our golf departments, as they enjoyed a round on the Brabazon. Some good golf among the trade but some tough holes, for which I believe I was blamed....

WEATHER CONDITIONS

I know we had a terrible January with average rainfall across the UK at 225mm - 9 inches in old money. It was the third wettest January on record. This varied from region to region with Scotland and N Ireland worst hit. This has put our industry on the back foot in terms of revenue streams and incomes. I am sure it will have a long term effect bearing in mind the horrendous summer of 2007. It is an impact we could do without and hopefully February will be kinder with more favourable weather forecasts.

When planning winter projects, I know that the norm in recent years within the industry is to do a lot more construction and disruptive work in the winter months than in the summer, so our greenkeepers are in need of some good weather in February and March if we are to push these plans on, otherwise the season will be on us. In addition we have to consider an early Easter in mid-March increasing the possibility of higher golf attendance and therefore expectation. There will be significant pressure to finish winter projects when really our golf season is May to October. This could cost us two valuable months of completion and again give us another back-log of work to carry through into next winter.

I hope you are all getting through your workloads and managing expectations in a difficult year already.



Kenny MacKay

Your next issue of GI will be with you by April 7th
Visit our website for a full archive of BIGGA magazine issues at www.bigga.co.uk